

## Tradition

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Category: How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Humor, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Astrid, Hiccup

Status: Completed

Published: 2011-12-24 12:52:23

Updated: 2011-12-24 12:52:23

Packaged: 2016-04-26 13:09:17

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 4,866

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: After the events of Gift of the Night Fury, Hiccup decides to help Astrid tweak one of her tradition ideas. Fluff and Fun!

Happy Snoggletog!

## Tradition

Hey guise... remember me? This is another seasonal contest entry of mine. More details at the bottom!

**\*\*Please Read! \*\***For those who haven't seen the deleted scenes in Gift of the Night Fury: one of Astrid's "tradition" ideas involved hanging a severed or "missing" toe over a doorway and punching whoever walked under it in the face. The Missing Toe tradition. Known victims: Hiccup, Snotlout, and the Twins.

Also... I don't own How to Train your Dragon :)

**\*\*Tradition\*\***

The air itself had frosted since the passing of Solstice Eve. Trees turned white in their rime casings with boughs bent downward, laden in snow. The thickest of mitts and boots and cloaks were donned in light of the changing weather and greeting words pillowed into visibility between passing Vikings. Still, the sting inside his throat and the numbness of his nose could never keep Hiccup from the skies for long.

It only shortened his flight time.

Breathless and sated from their morning flight, dragon and rider scanned the village for a subtle landing area. They clung to Berk's outskirts, keeping low, skirting the forests and ducking around tall structures—all in the name of evading detection. The steady beat of hammers billowed from the village like smoke as repairs for the Hidden Egg Debacle continued. Hiccup knew he was expected to be

helping down there and wanted to avoid word reaching his father that he chose to fly instead.

His eyes sought out a livestock barn atop one of the northern hills where Snotlout, Tuffnut, and Fishlegs hammered diligently at their assignment.

"There," Hiccup murmured into the collar of his vest. Every time he opened his mouth the air bit at his tongue.

He nudged the tailfin and Toothless took the cue to bank left. Their bodies moved in sync for a clean landing; they swooped low behind homes and stables to escape detection, swift and fleeting as any imagination's figment, and came to a rest in the shadow of the barn. Toothless fanned his wings before his paws touched ground and a light dusting of snow was thrown over the three laboring boys. The chill and flakes slowed their hammers until their work ceased completely.

"Hey, thanks!" Snotlout called in false cheer. He whacked his powered work area with the side of his hammer to shock some of the snow from it. "I thought this could be a little more challenging."

Hiccup slid from the saddle.

"Sorry," he apologized with more formality than meaning. Wind nip had chafed his cheeks and stunned his limbs; the only thing on his mind was getting his fingers warm again.

"Hey Hiccup," Fishlegs greeted. He was the only boy of the three who didn't look annoyed with him.

"Hey," Hiccup breathed. He set to fiddling with the belts of Toothless' harness. If he took the flying gear off here, left it in the barn, and later carried it through the back of his house he may get away with no one noticing his forbidden flight...present company aside.

"\_Whoa man\_!" Tuffnut's voice shouted down from the top of the barn's roof. Hiccup's head snapped up with a start; he had forgotten spying Tuffnut up there earlier. "What happened to \_you\_?"

There was no mistaking whom he addressed; Tuffnut jeered down at Hiccup with his legs astride the peaked, wooden slope.

"Huh?" Hiccup looked upon his appearance, where leaves and flecks of bark clung to his clothes and harness. "Oh..." he deadpanned. "That. We cut it a little too close to some trees."

With the cold air came a waning desire for altitude. Hiccup had used the new flying limitation to practice maneuvering through land-based objects—namely treetops. Reaction time with his prosthetic had improved over the months but there were some instances where Toothless miscalculated having a human on his back. Lucky for Hiccup, his face was numb enough to survive a few branches cracking against his cheeks.

"Why were you out flying while the rest of us had to work?" Snotlout asked with aggression likely brought on from cold, labor, and the unfairness of having to work while Hiccup flew.

"Uh..." Hiccup paused in his unfitting to pat Toothless' neck.  
"Because Toothless needed to fly. These Night Furies...they're high maintenance, you know?"

Toothless growled in agreement. Hiccup knew the dragon would demand extra treats later just to prove this 'high maintenance'.

His cousin snorted. Air condensed from his nostrils like a rattled bull.

"Hookfang wants to fly too. You don't see me skipping out on chores."

Hiccup couldn't feel too guilty; Snotlout spent most of their childhood skipping chores to practice weaponry. That he often practiced with Astrid only served to spark Hiccup's annoyance.

"Hookfang does not," Hiccup said flatly. "He has babies."

A day or so of intense observation brought Hiccup to the realization that parent dragons were loath to let their brood out of sight. Even when hunting, they often left their hatchlings under the care of another dragon until they returned.

"Oi! Where's the ladder?" Tuffnut called from above.

"It's on the other side of the barn," Fishlegs supplied. The hefty lad had set aside his hammer to rub life into his hands.

"Oh yeah..." Tuffnut mumbled before his head disappeared over the barn's summit.

Hiccup almost wanted to watch Tuffnut crawl around on the icy roof in search of the ladder just to see if he'd fall, but his fingers throbbed for warmth.

"I haven't gotten to ride Meatlug in a week," Fishlegs lamented. It was the first time he expressed sadness over being grounded; usually he was content to play with the baby Gronkles.

"I can take her out for you," Hiccup offered without thinking.

He had hardly finished the suggestion before Toothless whacked him with his tail and Snotlout raged, "You need to work like us!"

Snotlout swung his hammer against the barn. Snow clinging to the roof's fringe dropped around him with heavy plops that sunk into the ground like footsteps.

"Wuhâ€™\_arrgh\_!"

Tuffnut's shriek carried from the other side of the barn before silencing in a sudden, mighty thud. Snotlout, Fishlegs and Hiccup all stared at each other.

A very still moment passed. Then Tuffnut's muffled voice floated to them over the same path as his scream.

"\_I'm okay...\_"

Snotlout started laughing.

"You know, people have died from falling off of roofs," Fishlegs reproached.

Hiccup rolled his eyes and set to removing his harness, brushing clumps of pine and leaves from it as he went. He paused when movement downhill caught his attention, then groaned when he looked.

Thyra Dalgaard had caught another Terror and was forcing her affections on it.

"Thyra," Hiccup said with the patience of a man twice his age. "I don't need to tell you how much he doesn't like that."

The eight year old froze in her trek past him. She looked down at the defeated Terror hanging in her arms. She was nearly tall enough to carry the dragon without his tail dragging on the ground. Nearly.

"Thyra..." Hiccup said again, this time with more warning.

Thyra released the dragon and watched as the Terror took off into the snow.

Toothless snorted, his vapory breath rose from his nostrils in twin strings. The Night Fury's feelings about Terrors were no secret to Hiccup.

"No one deserves that," Hiccup muttered him.

Fishlegs shuffled up to Hiccup's side. He cast a shadow over the brunet with his towering height.

"She'll have another one in no time," Fishlegs said of the young girl who now stared forlornly in the direction of the escaped Terror. He worried his lip. "Oh, I hope she hasn't found Meatlug's nest..."

"I'll have a talk with her," Hiccup promised. He had\_ had\_ talks with herâ€”with several of the kidsâ€”about their handling of smaller dragons. A dragon's tolerance only went so far. One would snap back some day, a child would get hurt, a parent would get a hold of the offending dragon and...

"Always have to be the hero, don't you?" Tuffnut had just rounded the corner of the barn, a limp in his movement and the usual mocking swagger in his voice. Hiccup took the tone in stride.

"Only where dragons are concernedâ€”\_hey\_!" Hiccup yelped when Snotlout's mallet swung into the snow-cleared, moist earth by his feet. His cousin hopped from the stepladder he had been using to reach the higher boards, likely realizing no work would be done so long as Hiccup was there to distract them.

Snotlout made a wise decision in moving away from Toothless to stand at Tuffnut's other side. Toothless did not like people throwing

weapons at Hiccup, even when just for a scare.

"Well, don't you look pretty today," Snotlout chortled with his hands on his hips. His eyes were fixated on Hiccup's head.

Tuffnut had a hard grin on his face as he snickered.

"Yeah, now I can appreciate it up close. I think it looks lovely with his tunic."

Snotlout nodded. "It really brings out his eyes."

"Makes those freckles pop."

"Adds ten pounds."

Hiccup had finally shrugged out of his harness and squinted in suspicion to their quips. "What?"

"Um, I think they mean the stuff in your hair," Fishlegs pointed out. The blond was of little other help, having to bite his lip to keep from joining the other two in their sniggers.

"My..." Hiccup thread both his hands through his hair and came out with a thicket of leaves caught in his fingers—"odd, yellow-green leaves tied by a couple of waxy-white berries. "What the—"?"

"Mistletoe!"

The girl's voice startled all three of the boys. Apparently, Hiccup wasn't the only one who thought Thyra had already left.

Then his face paled. "Missing toe?"

The bruise had faded but Astrid's deluded attempt at instilling holiday traditions had not yet faded from memory. The boys jerked and glanced around them for any sign of hanging toes or a lurking Astrid.

"Mistletoe," Thyra repeated more strongly. She pointed to the berried leaves held by Hiccup. "Gothi's teaching me."

"What is it?" Fishlegs asked, insistent on knowing.

"It fixes infurr-ility," Thyra answered, stumbling over the word. "...Whatever that is."

Tuffnut looked at Snotlout. "In fur-ility?"

"I think she means infertility," Snotlout murmured back.

Thyra nodded. "Yeah. That."

Fishlegs' face pinkened. "Oh...that's when...I mean—"when a boy's—"a man's—" "

"It's when you can't have babies," Hiccup interjected, still observing the leaf in his hands. He had seen this sort of plant before—"usually in clusters over the higher branches of trees. What

a peculiar name...

"Waitâ€"I \_know\_ mistletoe," Fishlegs muttered to himself. His eyes bulged when the answer came to him and he uttered a small cry. "Isn't that poisonous? That's how Baldr dies in the stories!"

"Ugh," Tuffnut recoiled from Hiccup with the same amount of uncalled repulsion. "Wouldn't that make it bad luck? Get that away from me!"

"You don't need anymore bad luck, Hiccup," Snotlout told him. His face and tone hardly conveyed the concern to match his words. The thought of Hiccup receiving more bad luck appeared to amuse him.

"It actually \_protects\_ against witchcraft," Thyra informed them with an air of smugness. It seemed she enjoyed telling older children what was what. "Gothi says so."

"I think I hear Gothi calling for you," said Snotlout. He pointed to the forest. "In there."

Thyra saw through the lie and glowered.

Hiccup continued to observe the mistletoe, twisting the stem so that the berries alternated in catching the sun.

"Funny how it sounds like Missing Toe," he hummed. A thought began to form in his mind; an idea he couldn't quite see to completion at the moment. But it was there, niggling.

Tuffnut snorted. "I know, right? Except this won't get us a punch in the face. Man, if Ruffnut's fat head wasn't in the way I would have knocked Astrid right back."

He made a menacing fist to emphasize his point.

"No, you wouldn't have," Fishlegs droned.

A small smile came to Hiccup's face.

"Is it weird this is giving me ideas?" he asked to no one in particular. A queer and potentially harebrained idea to be sure.

"Yes," intoned Snotlout. Vikings found Hiccup's ideas to be disturbing at best. Astrid never came up with new ideas before she started dating Hiccup; she was content to practice and master the ideas of warrior Vikings before her. If her behavior over Snoggletog was anything to go by, Hiccup had somehow convinced her it was okay to create ideas.

It was not okay.

Snotlout was very against ideas.

To Snotlout's chagrin, Hiccup nodded once, resolute.

"I'm going to find Astrid," he announced. "Come on Toothless."

He collected his flying gear in a bundle, dashed into the barn, and

deposited the roll of leather and metal into a corner. Then he set off in ankle-deep snow to find Astrid.

Fishlegs turned to the other boys as Hiccup parted with a half-wave farewell over his shoulder

"We were talking about bad luck...then he gets an idea and goes to see Astrid?"

Tuffnut shrugged. "Makes sense to me."

Snotlout picked his hammer up out of the snow.

"If this involves another "tradition" I'll volunteer myself an Outcast."

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><p><strong>#####<strong>

"A little higher...too high, tooâ€s\_teady\_!"

Hiccup clutched at the grooved wood bordering the Hofferson's front door as the head he stood upon jolted.

"Perfect," Hiccup gasped when he thought he caught his balance.

He kept his good foot on Toothless' crown, not wanting to hurt the dragon with his metal one, and continued his efforts in fastening the mistletoe to Astrid's doorway. It proved a troublesome task; standing one-legged on a living creature braced only by the wall of a house, was an unfavorable situation for a young man who could only seem to find balance \_off\_ his feet.

A creak sounded from the other side of the doorâ€Hiccup would swear by itâ€and he stilled, his ears strained.

He had been "seeing" Astrid for months now in a relationship that consisted of long talks and quick kisses. Despite taking things slow, her parents still terrified him. The last thing Hiccup wanted was for the Hofferson matriarch to find him messing with her house.

His fumbles with the string hastened.

Gods, how did Astrid \_do\_ this? She tied a detached, rotting toe, for Thor's sake! A piece of foliage shouldn't cause him so much trouble!

Toothless moaned.

"Almost there, buddy." Hiccup's fingers, still numbed from his morning flight, couldn't quite get the string to loop properly.

A clatter sounded from within. He definitely heard something \_that\_ time!

"\_Back up\_!" Hiccup hissed in a fervid whisper. "\_Downâ€\_!"

The door swung open. Toothless reared back and Hiccup lost his balance.

"Wh-wh-\_woah\_!"

His arms wheeled comically in his final teeterâ€"then Hiccup felt his stomach squeeze in suspension as the rest of his body came crashing into the snow, back first. The ankle-deep bank provided little cushion even for someone of Hiccup's weight. The wind flew from his ribs in a painful rush.

To her credit, Ruffnut Thorston hardly spared either male a glance. She stormed from the house with swinging fists.

"Ohâ€"Iâ€"thatâ€"" Hiccup coughed, fishing for an excuse. He needn't have bothered; Ruffnut continued past him.

"I quit!" she snapped as she marched. She paused only to thrust a finger in Hiccup's face. "You better have a supply of pants on hand because \_she\_'s not going to be making any for you."

"What...?"

Before Hiccup could focus on her words or her finger she had already continued crunching through the snow.

"Maybe I have better things to do than sew pants!" Astrid snapped from the step of her home. Toothless chose that moment to slink away with his tail dragging in the snow.

Ruffnut spun near the top of the hill she had stormed.

"\_Everyone can do it but you!\_" she hollered so loudly a number of people stopped their repair tasks to listen.

Hiccup could \_see\_ Astrid's hackles rise and knew nothing annoyed the girl more than being bad at something otherwise considered elementary. She only liked to stand out if it put her in a good light.

"Shut up!"

"\_You fail at life\_!"

"Ruffâ€"!" Astrid made to step outside but the scene at the foot of her home could no longer escape her attention. She looked down at the bottom stoop to see her suitor picking himself up on unsteady legs and shaking packed snow from his vest. "Hiccup?"

Even with snow trapped in his shirt, burning his skin, Hiccup had to smile at that tone of surprise.

"Hi," he said brightly.

"Hi," she repeated, blinking from the shock of blinding snow and Hiccup's unexpected appearance. She took notice of Toothless kneading the snow at the side of her house with cat-like concentration. "Uh...what are you guys doing here?"



Hiccup shrugged. "Just wanted to see you. Still under house arrest?"

The surprise slid from her face and her expression became one of self-awareness. She took a step back into her home and leaned against the doorframe.

"Yes."

The trouble Astrid had gotten in for her egg-scheme had been the most she ever faced by her parents. When she wasn't helping with repairs she was in the strict confinements of her home, limited to chores and lessons. No flying and absolutely\_ no Hiccup.\_

"Are \_you\_ helping with repairs?" she asked. Astrid nudged her chin toward the village full of beating hammers and singing saws. Most of the homes had been fixed with priority to keep winter sickness from spreading. Barns, fences and docks were now underway.

Still smiling, Hiccup answered, "No."

Astrid pursed her lips, taking in his flushed face and wild hair—then the lounged Toothless lolling his tongue at her. Toothless only ever sat \_that\_ still after he had been flown.

"Your dad's going to kill you," she stated.

Hiccup smiled a smidge wider. "That's why I haven't gone home yet."

Astrid sighed. "Hiccup—you should really help the village out."

The chief's son struck a pose.

"This body wasn't made for building."

Astrid couldn't stop the right corner of her mouth from quirking; he looked more goofy than manly. She would not laugh though. She would not reward the flighty behavior she was trying to help him grow out of.

Hiccup had gotten the reaction he wanted, anyhow—a smile. He sobered and thrust his hands into his vest.

"But really, I think I'm better suited for the new nursery. Situating dragons and stuff. I work better with things I know how to do," he said with a helpless shrug.

"You know how to fix things," Astrid pointed out. She also didn't like it when he made excuses.

Unfortunately, excuses were Hiccup's forte.

"But I'll get distracted," he said with an edge of slyness. "I'll think of ways to improve something and then I'll go ahead and start improving without asking for permission because I know dad'll say 'no', and eventually someone will catch me and they'll have to take it apart and restart the repairs...I'm doing everyone a favor by keeping away."

"Uh huh," Astrid said in a flat voice.

He could sense her annoyance but Hiccup had learned to brave her temper long ago. He brushed some hair from his eyes and stepped onto the threshold with her.

"So...do you wanna go for a fly?" he offered. "I bet Stormfly's getting antsy."

Astrid muttered something like 'incorrigible' under her breath before saying, "Hiccup, you know I can't. I'm under house arrest."

She could read in his expression that he thought she was making up excuses now.

"Why don't you just sneak out? Your parents aren't home, are they?" Hiccup asked.

He leaned into the weapon-laden room in search of said parents. Astrid pushed his shoulder. His loss of balance took him down a step.

"I am not sneaking out," she said strongly. "I'm being punished for...stupidity."

Hiccup gave her his infamous crooked smile. "Snotlout said it was one of your better ideas."

Astrid's cheeks colored some and she crossed her arms.

"Snotlout's an idiot."

She knew exactly what Snotlout thought of her ideas. A part of her could even agree with the broad boy's "days trapped inside left her plenty of time to think over her actions" but her pride kept her from voicing such thoughts.

"I don't know," Hiccup shrugged. "He has his moments."

Astrid continued to stare at him.

"As do you," Hiccup continued on. He stepped back onto the doorstep. "You really were onto something with some of your tradition ideas. Like that Missing Toe..."

Astrid threw a fist into her palm. Hiccup jumped out of instinct.

"Yeah," she said, suddenly animated. "I don't know why that didn't take! Who doesn't love punching?"

"I think it was the 'getting punched'," Hiccup inflected. When Astrid appeared to wait for a better reason he went on to say, "Not everyone enjoys that."

Astrid snorted. "Well yeah, but it's a great way to keep everyone on their guard."

"Again" "not a feeling favored for the holidays."

Astrid deflated and a scowl overtook her features. "Okay, so I suck at knitting and I suck at coming up with traditions? Is that what you're saying?"

The week had been rough enough with the mind numbing lessons and her confinement; she didn't need a stung ego added to the list.

Hiccup held up his hands. "No, no! I'm sure your knitting is fine. And you had great tradition ideas! I think they just needed to be tweaked a bit to stick around."

Astrid glanced at him—"not yet placated, but interested.

"Tweaked how?"

"Well," Hiccup began slowly. "I was just thinking...what if we had a tradition that was a little less violent and a little less gross?"

Astrid leaned back. She didn't look to buy into the idea. "Less violence and less gross...for a \_Viking\_ tradition?"

"Traditions don't \_have\_ to be so Vikingish," Hiccup argued. "It could just be...nice."

Astrid laughed. "Do you hear yourself sometimes?"

The cold had already begun to pinch her cheeks pink but the added prettiness couldn't hide the jape in her voice. Hiccup heaved a breath, knowing there were some differences they would never meet halfway for.

"Just...hear me out, okay? What if, instead of hanging severed toes overhead, we used something less smelly and more available?"

Astrid tilted her head from side to side as she considered the possibility.

"I guess that makes sense."

"Right, so something less gross," Hiccup reiterated. "And what if we changed that punch to something \_else\_ when someone walked under it?"

"Something \_less violent\_ right?" Astrid ventured in a tone betraying her disfavor. "What \_else\_ would you do to someone's face?"

Hiccup couldn't suppress his next smile.

"Really? You can't think of what \_I\_ might want to do with \_your\_ face?"

Astrid narrowed his eyes at him and turned her cheek, though her lips now fought against her own smile.

"Where are you going with this...?" she asked slowly.

Hiccup grinned.

"Look up," he said.

Astrid tilted her head to see the yellow-green leaves pinned by three small berries overhead. They fluttered gently in the breeze.

"What is \_that\_?" she asked.

"Mistletoe."

Her eyes snapped back to him—first dark with shock at the word and it's familiarity, then lightened by playful understanding.

"I see," she said. "Does this mean you're ready to kiss \_me\_ for once?" She prodded his chest with her finger.

Hiccup's grin heartened. Warmed by her closeness and thrilled by her words, he leaned forward, touched the soft underside of her jaw with his fingertips and guided her lips to his. They were nearly of equal height by now; Astrid no longer needed to turn her neck to meet his mouth. The kiss was soft and simple—"no more than a quick press of lips"—but rich for the girl who had not seen Hiccup in nearly a week.

Hiccup drew back slowly and Astrid rubbed her lips together to hold some of the warmth he had left before the cold stole it. She was noticeably happier than when Hiccup first arrived; her features had relaxed and her eyes half-lidded.

"Well \_I\_ am all for this tradition," she told him brightly. "Though I'm not sure it'll be received any better than my version."

"Vikings are weird like that," Hiccup stated, unable to shake his own silly grin. He hadn't realized how much he missed kissing her until just then; kissing and flying were his two separate necessities and one could not replace the other for long. "Giving and taking punches is nothing, but throw in a little public affection and suddenly they're kittens."

Astrid threw her head back and laughed freely. "Kittens!"

\_"Oi! You're not tae see him!"\_

The brassy bellow crashed into the moment with all the power and unwelcome destruction as a catapulted bolder. Hiccup nearly jumped out of his skin at the call.

"Oh no, my mum's back," Astrid moaned.

The tall, blonde woman of Astrid's brood had just crested the very hill Ruffnut disappeared over moments before. She stared down at the young couple with flared nostrils.

A shiver of fear ran through Hiccup but Astrid's proximity, the refreshment of her touch, left him strangely and suddenly encouraged. Hiccup kissed Astrid again. He could feel her stiffen under the grip he had on her shoulders.

As soon as Hiccup drew back Astrid sputtered, "What are you—" "She's—"!

"A kiss for each berry!" the young man breathed and then he kissed her one last time, longer and harder than they had ever shared before. Astrid gripped the front of Hiccup's tunic with both hands to keep her balance. Her heart thudded against her throat at the unexpected sensationsâ€"at the heat and his smell, at the pressure and the roughness of his chin and the subtle movements of his jaw that drew her top lip between hisâ€"

\_"HEY!"\_

Then Hiccup was gone. Astrid staggered back against the doorframe, suddenly cold and panting and chuckling in winded disbelief. She turned her head to watch Hiccup ride Toothless barebackâ€"the dragon galloping through snow and Vikings with her axe-swinging mother shouting after them.

The commotion at the Hofferson household drew even more attention to her stoop. Vikings were now muttering to one another, staring at her, at her mother, at Hiccup...

Astrid craned her neck to see the three-berried leaf cluster still dangling overheadâ€"so innocent, and yet somehow more dangerous than her Missing Toe idea. She laughed; her breath clouded in the air and reached towards the mistletoe like curled smoke. Only he would come up with something innocently dangerous.

"Astrid!" her mother snapped. She was marching back, furious by Hiccup's audacity and his escape. Astrid had to bite her lip to keep from smiling too much but her lips only tingled at the force and she remembered that last kiss. Hiccup likely just cost her another week under house arrest and she couldn't even muster the proper amount of vexation to be very mad.

Maybe she'd knit him a scarf for his trouble.

**\*\*The End.\*\***

**\*\*\*\*\***

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><p>The Sticks and Stones forum held a competition for a holiday httpd fic. This ended up winning first place! But I really recommend you all visit that site and read all the other entrees because there were some really fantastic ones (I left a link in my profile). Seriously guys, if you aren't a part of that forum you can't call yourself a true httpd fan! :D<p>

I know a lot of you thought I had diedâ€"it's been a couple months since I last posted anythingâ€"but I just want to let you all know that I'm still in the process of settling down in Korea (check my location on my profile page...it changed of it's own accord!) and I'm absolutely loving Seoul. I still need to get my feet under me but I've slowly been getting back into writing and drawing.

So, as the first thing I've written in over a month please let me know what you think! I wanted it to be light hearted and simple but don't hold your tongue if you think I've lost any pizzazz :)

Merry Christmas and Happy Snoggletog everyone!

End  
file.